

Dr. Tamu Lucero Representing Stamford Public Schools

Addressing Program Equity and Capacity in Stamford Public Schools:

Stamford is a dynamic, growing city, currently the third largest in the state, soon to overtake New Haven and become the second largest city in Connecticut. The student population in Stamford Public Schools has grown as the resident population has increased over the past 25 years. Student enrollment in SPS has grown by 4,675 students – from 11,394 in 1989-90 to 16,069 in 2013-14.

While facilities have been added to SPS (the UConn site now houses the Scofield Magnet Middle School, AITE has a new home adjacent to Rippowam Middle School, and 30 modular classrooms are on school sites), the additions to school facilities are inadequate to educate the growing population. To deal with increasing student enrollment, the district has repurposed existing spaces in schools. Schools are presently using offices, storage rooms and hallways as instructional areas. **At this time new space must be added to the capacity of the Stamford Public Schools for optimal instruction.**

Over the past year, City and Board of Education staff have engaged in a concentrated study of enrollment and school facilities. The effort has been informed by facility and enrollment studies completed by outside consultants. This report summarizes what we have learned. The report includes the recommendation to add an interdistrict Kindergarten-5 IB Elementary Magnet School at the newly acquired City site at 200 Strawberry Hill Avenue.

Key findings relative to capacity and enrollment include the following:

- Mandated requirements for instructional programs and increased enrollment have combined to create serious space inadequacies in the elementary school.
- In 2013-14, six of the 12 elementary schools were at/above 100% capacity; in 2015-16 through 2023-24, all elementary schools will exceed capacity.
- By 2020-21, enrollment K-12 will approach the total capacity of the elementary, middle and high schools.
- Educational standards have changed. Years ago, most instruction took place in “regular” classrooms. Today, federal and state mandates require small group instruction. Existing schools were not built with small group instruction spaces.
- Small group instruction is required for English Language Learners (ELLs), Special Ed students and students who are not proficient in reading and math.
- Diversity in the student population in SPS has increased with larger numbers of ELLs and Special Ed students.

- Instruction is occurring in sub-par or potentially unsafe locations.
- Inequities exist across elementary schools.
- Short term solutions to address crowding have been exhausted.
- A new Kindergarten-5 magnet school with 5 classrooms per grade level would enable the most crowded elementary schools – Newfield, Springdale, Stark and Stillmeadow – to recover 24 classrooms.
- The addition of a new Kindergarten-5 school would lessen the current space inadequacies. Additional investments in school capacity are anticipated.
- The conditions of school facilities affect:
 - Educational quality
 - Health and safety
 - Community property
 - Stamford's reputation
- Stamford must make a collective investment in its future and create new space to accommodate the current student population and plan for future growth.
- The 200 Strawberry Hill site is recommended as the site for a new Kindergarten-5 Interdistrict Magnet Elementary School for several reasons:
 - Optimally located to enroll students from the most crowded elementary schools – Newfield, Springdale, Stark and Stillmeadow.
 - Might reduce bussing.
 - Would preserve green space.
 - Could accommodate an expanded facility to include grades 6-8 in future years.
 - Would continue the legacy of the site as an educational facility for Stamford.
- The proposed new Kindergarten-5 Interdistrict Magnet Elementary School would be an expansion of Rogers International School.
 - The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) gives preference to interdistrict magnet schools that expand existing successful programs.
 - More than 500 students applied for 88 kindergarten seats at Rogers for 2014-15.
- For Interdistrict Magnet Schools, the CSDE supports construction and operating costs.
 - CSDE pays 75% of construction costs.

- CSDE covers approximately 33% of operating costs (operating costs at Rogers are reduced from approximately \$5m to \$3.4m with a 33% reimbursement from CSDE).
- Educational specifications and estimated construction costs for a Kindergarten-5 International Baccalaureate expansion of Rogers were submitted by June 30, 2014 to the Construction Office of the CSDE, as required.
- Initial reactions from the CSDE are very positive.
- By November 1, 2014, an Operational Design Plan must be submitted to the Office of School Choice of the CSDE.
- A recommendation by the Office of Construction to the State Legislature is expected by the end of November 2014 for “category placement review.”